

# YUMMY NORTHWEST

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## Garden care

Perhaps you haven't thought of it quite this way, but your garden needs good food, too. While you are planning your own meals, think about what you can do to make your garden happy.

In this issue of **Yummy Northwest**, professional gardener Skyler Walker shows us how easy it is to use real food and food byproducts in the garden.

The tips suggested here come from years of experience and the combined wisdom of the many gardeners Skyler keeps in touch with.

## Feed your garden

Not only is food delicious and good to eat, it can also be used in various forms to enhance our gardens.

Save crushed eggshells from your omelet and add them to your garden to enrich it with calcium and trace elements and as a weapon in the ongoing battle against slugs, which are somewhat deterred from crawling across the crushed shells. (But since slugs are known to be able to cross broken glass, crushed shells are not a perfect barrier.)

The grounds from your morning coffee are particularly good to scratch into the soil around acid-loving plants. And again, in the slug battle, anecdotal, controversial evidence suggests that circling slug favorites, such as hostas, with a ring of coffee grounds will repel slugs. I have found this to be somewhat effective if the grounds are frequently replenished.



## Local nurseries online

### For ornamentals

Cistus Nursery  
Sauvie Island, Ore.  
[www.cistus.com](http://www.cistus.com)

Forestfarm  
Williams, Ore.  
[www.forestfarm.com](http://www.forestfarm.com)

Joy Creek Nursery  
Scappoose, Ore.  
[www.joycreek.com](http://www.joycreek.com)

### For food seeds

Ed Hume Seeds  
Puyallup, Wash.  
[www.humeseeds.com](http://www.humeseeds.com)

Nichols Garden Nursery  
Albany, Ore.  
[www.nicholsgardennurser  
y.com](http://www.nicholsgardennurser<br/>y.com)

Territorial Seed Company  
Cottage Grove, Ore.  
[www.territorial-seed.com](http://www.territorial-seed.com)

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Many thanks to **Rainy Side Gardeners** for their essential input. Learn more about gardening in the Pacific Northwest at [www.rainyside.com](http://www.rainyside.com).

Sprinkling slugs with salt is a well-known killer, although I find it disgusting to slaughter the slugs in that way, and one must be sure not to salt the ground as that will make it toxic for your plants,

Add banana peels to your garden beds; the banana peel rots quickly and adds calcium, magnesium, sulfur, and potassium to the soil. Roses in particular are said to benefit from banana peels placed in the planting hole. None of these folkloric fertilizing tips seem to address the look of soil decorated with banana peels, so perhaps the gardener should chop them up or just add them to the compost bin.

Another way to festoon your garden with fruit is to place grapefruit rinds to entrap slugs. The slimy creatures spend the night in the rinds. Then in the morning, you can discard them, if you have the stomach for it.

Milk can be used as an effective fungicide to control powdery mildew.

Mix one cup milk with 9 cups of water, and spray the leaves of affected plants twice a week; being sure to spray the undersides of the leaves.

Another powdery mildew cure is made from one ounce of baking soda per gallon of water sprayed on the leaves of affected plants.

Cornmeal has proven antifungal properties. Soak one cup cornmeal in one gallon of water overnight; strain, and spray plants affected by fungal diseases.

Corn gluten is a different product from cornmeal and is sold in garden centers as a pre-emergent weed killer.

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An insecticide can be made by blending a couple of cayenne peppers, an onion, and a clove of garlic with a gallon of water and letting stand for 24 hours, then straining and spraying infested plants. Be careful when using any hot pepper recipe, because it can burn your skin and eyes.

Hot pepper flakes can be sprinkled in the garden to deter raccoons or cats from digging. The flakes will need to be reapplied after each rain.

There are many recipes for deer repellents involving foul-smelling mixtures of rotten eggs, peppers, Tabasco sauce, garlic, and water, all of which have to be reapplied after rain. Personally, I prefer an 8-foot fence to a garden smelling of rotten eggs.

White vinegar is an effective weed-killer when sprayed on a path; it cannot be used in garden beds as it will, of course, also kill your choice plants by affecting the Ph of the soil. It must be applied on a sunny, hot day. While commercial, extra-strong vinegars are available for this purpose, a jug of white vinegar applied full-strength will work as well.

Finally, all your vegetable and fruit kitchen waste can be added to a critter-proof compost bin, layered with some soil to encourage decomposition, to make a wonderful rich mulch for your garden.

## Food Byproducts as Mulch

Coffee grounds can be attained in quantity from a friendly local espresso stand, especially if you provide them with a bucket! These make an excellent mulch for acid-loving plants, such as blueberries and rhododendrons, if used thinly enough and dug into the soil so that the grounds do not mold.

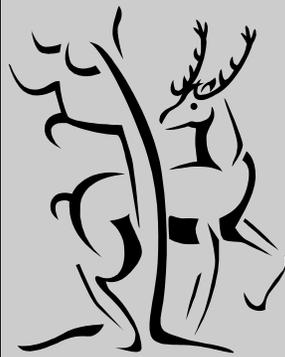
Cocoa mulch is available in bags at some garden centers. There has been considerable controversy about whether or not cocoa mulch still contains theobromine, the element in chocolate that is toxic to dogs and cats, who might be tempted to eat the mulch because it smells deliciously of chocolate. While I do enjoy the smell of cocoa mulch, I would not risk using it because my or a neighbor's animals might

## Deer repellent recipe

3 raw eggs  
3 tablespoons red hot sauce  
3 tablespoons garlic juice or minced garlic

Add enough water to a blender to process and mix well. Add this to a gallon of water and spray on plants. A product such as Wilt-Proof will make the spray stick to the plants.

The usual warnings apply: Do not consume raw eggs; beware of getting hot sauce in eyes.



## A little warning about slug repellent . . .

For slugs, a small amount of beer in a shallow pan will work – but the singing at night is terrible.

~ unknown

consume it.

For more information, visit <http://www.snopes.com/critters/crusader/coamulch.asp>.

Other food byproducts that can be used for mulch are buckwheat hulls, ground corncobs, cranberry vines, hops, peanut hulls, sugar cane, and walnut shells. For an overview of the benefits of each of these, see <http://www.gardenguides.com/how-to/tipstechniques/composting/mulch-noframe.asp>

The best mulch may be the lovely compost that you can make from all your kitchen scraps – with the exception of dairy and meat products.

If you use that ubiquitous mulch, bark, remember to add nitrogen fertilizer to your soil because bark may take nitrogen from the soil as it decomposes. And please do not use that harsh and unattractive red bark. It looks so unnatural in any garden.

Skyler Walker owns Tangly Cottage Gardening on the Long Beach Peninsula in Washington State. Some of the delightful gardens she cultivates can be seen on her Web site at [tanglycottage.com](http://tanglycottage.com).



## About Yummy Northwest

Each monthly issue highlights an edible delight available in the Pacific Northwest.

## Contact the editor

Comments, corrections, topic ideas, and submissions are all most welcome at [Yummy\\_Northwest@hotmail.com](mailto:Yummy_Northwest@hotmail.com). View archives at [yummynorthwest.com](http://yummynorthwest.com).